

Linking People, Knowledge, and Process for Rural Development

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Key Words

Timeline, Social Domain, Causal Dynamics, Activity Dynamics, Social Analysis CLIP, Ideal Scenario, Activity Mapping, Levels of Support, Honduras, Natural Resource Management, Agriculture, Community-based Research, University, UNA, poverty, Participatory Action Research

Context

- Almost two thirds of Honduras' seven million people live in poverty. For more than 20 years, efforts to address this problem have been designed by external institutions, including many foreign agencies.
- Little attention has been given to engaging local people directly in the design and planning process. As a result, communities and local institutions have come to depend on outside experts. Local capacity for self-development has withered. Real social and economic change has also been limited.
- There is an urgent need for institutions and communities to break out of this pattern. During the last three years, the National Agriculture University has supported the development of a new approach to rural development based on a process of collaborative action research that seeks to strengthen local communities and their institutions.

Question

How can communities, local governments, and institutions work together in ways that strengthen collaborative processes and achieve shared results?

Participants

- More than 250 men and women involved in agriculture (corn, beans, and coffee).
- Public institutions (4), non-governmental organizations (5), Catamacas municipal government agencies (2) and the University.



Tools

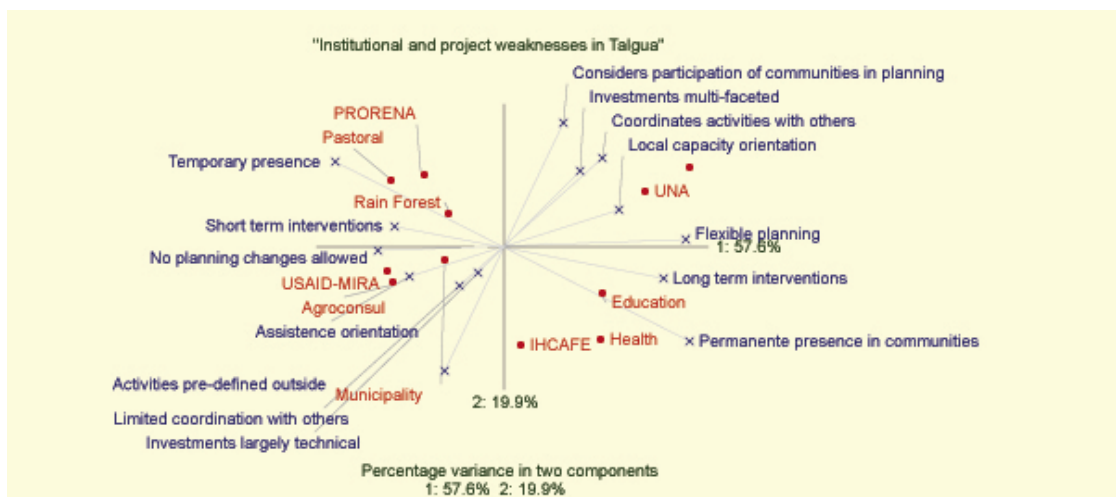
- Timeline
- Social Domain
- Causal Dynamics.
- Activity Dynamics
- Social Analysis CLIP
- Ideal Scenario
- Activity Mapping
- Levels of Support

Results

Timeline and **Social Domain** were used to explore the views held by communities and institutions on certain projects, and to build a space for the development of common interests.

Timeline	
Initial perceptions of communities ↓ “The projects and activities of institutions and the municipality do not help us in any way.”	Initial perceptions of institutions and municipalities ↓ “Local people don’t help at all; they are waiting for things to be done for them.”
Social Domain:	
A collaborative assessment showed that institutions that work in the same area <ul style="list-style-type: none">• do not coordinate their activities,• come and go intermittently,• develop very short term plans with rigid parameters and a technical assistance focus that does little for local capacities.	A collaborative assessment showed that communities’ experience with projects is very diverse. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is largely due to differences in the strengths and weaknesses of each community.

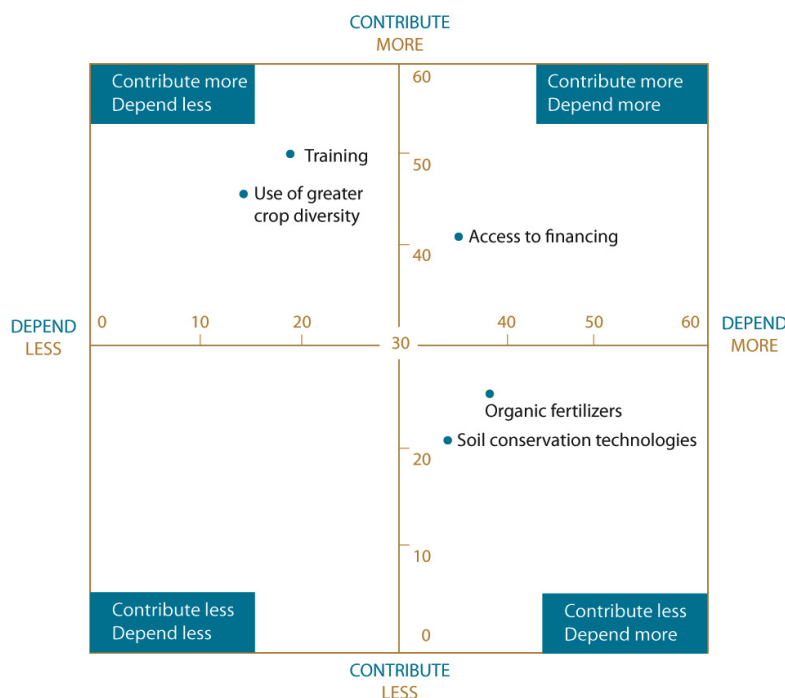
Participants decided that institutions, municipal agencies, and certain communities needed to engage in collaborative inquiry with various issues and sectors, with a view to enhancing coordination and building capacities collectively. (see Figures)



Problem Tree and **Causal Dynamics** were used to study water issues.

- Seven causes of water quality and supply problems were identified and their interaction assessed.
- Participants decided to focus on reducing the amount of shifting cultivation and deforestation, the most influential and interdependent causes of water problems.

A follow-up assessment of shifting cultivation using **Activity Dynamics** showed that if yields were increased, movement into new forests would decline. Participants prioritized actions to increase yields. This led to a focus on the need for greater crop diversity, training, and access to appropriate financing.



Ideal Scenario was then used to imagine ways to collaborate over the medium term, leading to the development of collaborative activity plans (**Activity Maps**).

Levels of Support was used to review the plans and to set commitments among actors.



Outcomes

- Participants developed new ways to plan and coordinate ongoing activities. This included forming an inter-institutional-community land management commission.
- Participants developed specific community-based projects, five of which are now funded by donors.

Contributions of SAS²

- Modelled collaborative processes where results and actions are broadly recognized and accepted.
- Combined participation with the mobilization of local and external knowledge grounded in specific actions.
- Created social cohesion among multiple stakeholders including children, women, men, students, technicians, and bureaucrats.
- Integrated research, action, and training.
- Viewed issues and the complexity of the system from various angles and considered various points of entry.